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"La Ciencia sin Moral es Vana"

INFORME DE INVESTIGACIÓN:

INFLUENCE OF SPANISH GRAMMAR OVER NINTH GRADERS´ ORAL

PRODUCTION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN WORLD HISTORY

CLASS AT INTERAMERICAN SCHOOL

PRESENTADO POR:

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a foreign language in a Spanish language context conveys a wide number of challenges not only for teachers but also for students. Coping with the influence of Spanish Grammar over the EFL oral production is one of the most common challenges that a high percentage of learners' experience. In this descriptive investigation, the researcher conducted a systematic qualitative process in order to find out information to provide a description of the influence of Spanish Grammar in EFL oral production by interviewing a group of ninth graders who have faced difficulties when expressing their ideas orally using the target language. After developing this investigation, the researcher found out that the lack of vocabulary affects students. The researcher also came up with concrete recommendations for those EFL learners whose oral proficiency is more likely to be influenced by Spanish Grammar, being writing lines the most relevant one.

INTRODUCTION

When studying a new language, everybody has to deal with different challenges that might hinder the learning process. Spanish speakers who study English as a foreign language (EFL) are not the exception. They experience a variety of difficulties that are caused by the variances and similarities between both languages in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency and grammar. In fact, one of the most common challenges that Spanish speakers deal with is the influence that Spanish Grammar has over the EFL oral production. This research aims to describe how and how much Spanish grammar affects the oral production in EFL learners.

Ninth graders in World History class at Interamerican School are the subjects of this descriptive research. The students who are the samples of this investigation are the ones that present the characteristics that somewhat make them be more directly influenced by Spanish Grammar, for example students who did not practice English before starting classes in the school. In the interviews, these students share important information about how Spanish Grammar affects them to create correct sentences in English.

In this investigation, the researcher applied some instruments which were useful to get valuable results in the collection of data. In order to specify the information gathered, the researcher created conclusions and recommendations that can be fruitful at the moment of sharing this investigation because teachers and students can have the opportunity to minimize the negative effects this problem causes.

CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1.   Research Problem

Ninth graders blend Spanish and English Grammar while using the foreign language orally.

1.2. Description of the Problem

Interamerican School is a bilingual institution that hosts more than four hundred students every year; most of these students are willing to reach university as English speakers. The curriculum for this school contains 14 subjects in different fields, such as pronunciation, conversational courses, grammar and composition, etc. making it challenging for the students who have briefly had contact with the target language. Since kindergarten, students show their weaknesses in the target language, for instance, lack of vocabulary, difficulties while understanding spoken language, and mispronunciation, but one of the hardest parts they have to deal with is the influence of Spanish Grammar in their oral production. As cited by Reyes, Garcia and Vidal (2010), Francisco Moreno said that oral production is "the real expression of the language in every situation that human can take in control and the person has to have the knowledge about the language used." In other words, students tend to blend Spanish with English while trying to carry out a conversation, expressing their ideas in the spoken way, etc.

Although ninth graders from Interamerican School have 24 hours per week to enhance their speaking abilities, they still struggle a lot with this issue because they are negatively influenced by Spanish Grammar. For instance, "Students use memorization to learn thus the English knowledge was very superficial and confined to limited vocabulary." (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). As a result, students do not develop communicative competence which means that they are not able to start, keep and wind up a conversation, strategic competence; also, they are incapable of recognizing the appropriate expressions to be used depending on the social context, sociolinguistic competence; besides, they cannot create sentences without spelling and grammar mistakes, grammar competence, and they are able to comprehend

neither spoken nor written language, discourse competence. As it was quoted by Hymes, "…a language learner acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. That's communicative competence; Strategic, discourse, socio-linguistic, and grammatical." (Hymes 1972, 277).

Analyzing some problems ninth graders students have to overcome while producing the target language is necessary since some students get frustrated when they keep blending Spanish Grammar while trying to have a conversation in English, and it is relevant to find out key elements that make them mix their mother tongue. That is why through, this period there is going to be a study to show more details about this issue. Therefore, these questions are necessary to develop the research:

What are the main causes of students´ blending Spanish Grammar in their EFL oral production?

How much does blending Spanish Grammar in their EFL production affect students in their performance in World History class?

1.3. Justification of Research

When learning English as a foreign language, Spanish speakers deal with different challenges that hinder them from developing the language effectively, for example, lack of vocabulary, striking differences in pronunciation, writing rules, being the influence of Spanish Grammar in their oral production one of the most relevant. However, it is difficult to provide a concrete answer to state why this happens because all students are different and come from different backgrounds. It is more than necessary to scrutinize the issue not only to know what mainly causes the students blend Spanish with English Grammar while speaking, but also to discover how much these students are affected.

The main purpose of this research is to discover the main causes of different weaknesses that students present due to the influence of Spanish Grammar in the English oral production as the second language in the learning process; moreover, knowing how much these issues affect is pursued in this research. All the students come from different backgrounds, and it is where the problem might come from because of the low level of English they have received, that is why they have those problems in the present. According to Olenka Bilash (2009), some students may have no knowledge, some may have a bit, and other students may have a good knowledge based upon which to build. However, each student is different, and present different problems in different skills like vocabulary, pronunciation and writing.

It is more than necessary to have a better understanding about the main causes of Spanish speakers´ blending Spanish and English Grammar in their oral production, for it is one of the main issues that hinder students to develop their linguistic competence. Undoubtedly, after knowing about what causes the use of Spanish Grammar in EFL oral production and discovering how much it affects, the teaching and learning process will certainly become more effective and meaningful because teachers and students from Interamerican School can effectively attain concrete benefits.

1.4. Research Objectives

1.4.1. General Objectives
To detect the influence of Spanish Grammar on ninth graders´ oral production in EFL

1.4.2. Specific Objectives
To acquire a wide understanding about the main causes of students´ mixing Spanish Grammar in their EFL oral production
To describe how much blending of Spanish Grammar affects students´ EFL oral production

1.5. Operationalization of Variables

General objective	Specific Objectives	Variables	Definition	Indicators
To detect the influence of Spanish Grammar on ninth graders' oral production in EFL	To acquire a wide understanding about the main causes of students´ mixing Spanish Grammar in their EFL oral production	Influence of Spanish Grammar over ninth graders	Difficulties students face due to the influence of Spanish Grammar	Influence of Spanish Grammar o Syntax ✓ Word order ✓ Negation ✓ plurals o semantics o use of prepositions o false cognates
	To describe how much blending of Spanish Grammar affects students´ EFL oral production	Students´ Oral Production in English as a foreign language	Students´ oral areas that are influenced by Spanish Grammar	Oral production o Management of the four macro-skills o Management of the most important sub-skills ✓ Pronunciation ✓ Fluency ✓ Grammar

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Students´ Oral Production in EFL

2.1.1 Students' Difficulties When Studying a Second Language

Learning a second language is a hard challenge students get because it demands a lot of effort and devotion. Some students study in a bilingual school because nowadays it is important in order to have better opportunities, but there are students who love English, and they motivate themselves to give their best. Though, it is believed that students who decide to study a second language do not have a clear idea of the difficulties they can find through the process. "Even though students are studying English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English." (Kannan, 2009). That is why students fear to study a second language and they do not find a way to build their confidence, so students struggle a lot with their self-esteem since they have to practice the new language without the necessary time to get confidence while expressing their ideas in a language they do not know well. According to Humphries (2011), students who study a second language increase their anxiety because it is the feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness associated with an arousal of the nervous system, so it affects students' performance because they do not know how to control what they feel toward the difficulties they need to face in their oral production. Also, students stress out when they mispronounce words because there are many words that have the same spelling as the native language and students think that the pronunciation does not change.

According to Arner (2012), it is difficult for students' brain to absorb the new sounds, rhythms and tones in order to adapt them into a new way of referring to ideas and objects orally because students do not have the capacity to remember vocabulary, structures and expressions they are exposed to since the very beginning. The brain needs to have a basic knowledge to build a context of understanding for the second language. However, students have the key to make the process easy or difficult

because everything depends on the attitude they have while studying a second language.

2.1.2. Mother Tongue and Cultural Influence when Learning a Second Language

Studying a second language is complicated since students blend their native language with the target language unconsciously. In other words, students are not able to communicate their ideas or thoughts without making mistakes in the oral production because they do not have the capacity to develop their pronunciation skill. "Second Language learners face so many difficulties mainly because of the negative interference of the mother tongue and the cultural differences." (Rhalmi, 2014). It means that learners tend to take into consideration the knowledge they have in their native language at the moment they are producing the second language. That is why, learners are critically influenced by their mother tongue when they pronounce words as a result of the difference in phonological systems. Additionally, learners face many difficulties with vocabulary, for they confuse words or phrases that look or sound similar in both the mother tongue and the target language.

On the other hand, cultural differences affect learners because they become aware of the importance to speak and comprehend the second language, but they have many problems to achieve their goal while studying a second language because of the context in which they are acquiring the target language. In other words, the expectations students have while listening to the second language are relevant to help them in the learning process. As Rhalmi mentioned, teachers must take into consideration the following strategies learners use to learn a second language:

- Learners tend to use their linguistic knowledge of the mother tongue (and may be knowledge of other languages they have learned.)
- Learners try to transfer their cultural knowledge to make assumption when communicating in the target language.
- Teachers must spot and highlight those shared features that may contribute to the target language learning.
- Teachers must be cautious in error correction because errors may be the result of negative language transfer or incorrect assumptions held about the target culture.

2.1.3. Four Macro Skills Students Have to Develop when Learning a Second Language

When students learn a second language, they need to develop four skills for having a complete and outstanding communication. Peñate (2002) mentioned that these necessary skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Talking about listening is important to mention that it includes the identification of sounds to process them into complete sentences or expressions. When students listen, they use their ears to receive individual sounds such as, letters, stress, rhythm and pauses. In this phase, the role of students' brain is vital since it helps them to convert the sounds into messages that mean something for them. Besides, listening is the language skill which learners usually find the most difficult. This happens because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word. To achieve the purposes related to this skill, Peñate established that the teacher plays an important role that is defined in the following steps.

1. It is important to help pupils prepare for the listening task well before they hear the text itself. First of all, the teacher must ensure that the pupils understand the language they need to complete the task and are fully aware of exactly what is expected of them. The pupils do not need to understand every word they hear.

2. The next important step is to encourage pupils to anticipate what they are going to hear. In everyday life, the situation, the speaker, and visual clues help to decode oral messages. A way to make things a bit easier to the pupils is to present the listening activity within the context of the topic of a teaching unit. This in itself will help pupils to predict what the answers might be. The teacher can help them further by asking questions and using the illustrations to encourage pupils to guess the answers even before they hear the text.

3. During the listening, the pupils should be able to concentrate on understanding the message, so teachers need to make sure that the pupils are not trying to read, draw, and write at the same time. Always give a second chance to listen

to the text to provide a new opportunity to those who were not able to do the task.

4. Finally, when pupils have completed the activity, they have to provide the answers from the whole class. Teachers have to try not to put individual pupils under undue pressure. Rather than confirming whether an answer is correct or not, play the audio again and allow pupils to listen again for confirmation. Teachers may give a variety of answers, in which case list them all on the board and play the text again, so that the class can listen and choose the correct one. Even if the pupils all appear to have completed the task successfully, always encourage them to listen to the text once more and check their answers for themselves.

To become a fluent speaker in English, students need to develop strong listening skills in order to comprehend what they listen in the appropriate way. Nevertheless, this is an enormous task students have because they have to attend different voices as often as they can to improve their abilities while interpreting the sounds.

Speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode that supports students to express their ideas, experiences and thoughts. For having the opportunity to produce the language students have to use some parts of the body in order to achieve the goal. For example, vocal tract, lips, teeth and tongue, etc. This skill gives students the chance to practice orally in different ways because they can have a dialogue, they can have a conversation naturally in the way and time they prefer and they are capable to have a presentation to share their point of views.

Based on Helen (2014), speaking skill involves three kinds of situations which are interactive, partially interactive and non-interactive. The interactive speaking situation includes face to face conversations in which students are able to show gestures and body language and phone calls in which students have the chance to ask for clarification if they do not understand one point during the process.

Furthermore, students can ask their partner to have lower speech or repeat something they did not listen. On the other hand, partially interactive situation involves giving a speech to the audience, and it does not allow interruption during the speech. One of the important aspects is that the students have the chance to discover if the audience understood by looking at their gestures or body language. The last one, non-interactive speaking situation is the recorded speech.

The third skill students need to develop in English is writing. This is the skill that helps students to have a correct communication. "Writing requires the mastery and concurrent use of a complex array of language skills, from vocabulary and spelling to the ability to organize and convey ideas." (Tubby, 2007). In other words, this difficult skill has to be developed by students to discover the way a message can be understood by the audience, so expressing ideas without grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes is really challenging, for it demands clarity to have a successful communication while having an oral conversation. Though, Henneke (2015) mentioned outstanding tips to overcome the difficulties while writing with the purpose of helping students to produce messages in a correct way orally because he thinks that students make mistakes in oral production when they do not have a clear idea of the structures, vocabulary and all the rules they need to take into account while talking in the second language.

1. Learn how to write good sentences.
2. Become more conversational by including questions.
3. Experiment with the voice by crushing long sentences and adding a dynamic rhythm.
4. Apply the principles of persuasion, so it is possible to inspire the audience to implement tips.
5. Pay attention to words in movie reviews, sports reports, and novels.

The last skill but not least important students learn while learning a second language is reading. A skill that makes students develop their critical thinking since they have to

analyze what they read to share their point of view providing a good massage orally. Likewise, this skill involves some techniques to vary the way students can practice to improve it. According to Smith (2006), students can reduce time and stress if they know the correct way to read a text before expressing their ideas in speaking activities that are useful to overcome fears. Moreover, he emphasizes that students are able to develop their level of understanding and their capacity to increase their concentration. On the other hand, Jones (2007) said that students need to have knowledge of the abilities they need to overcome the difficulties in reading skill, so students have to read and repeat orally what catches their attention to find pleasure, and they need to share their ideas to receive feedback in order to notice their progress. But, Taylor (2002) mentioned that students have to establish their goals to know what they want to achieve. It means that they need to choose topics they like to find a way to make reading a habit. Also, he says that students need to find someone to have short talks about the reading. To overcome the goals while reading, Taylor established the techniques students can implement in the routines to improve.

Scanning is the technique students might use when reading a telephone directory. Students pass their vision speedily over a section of text in order to find particular words or phrases that are relevant to their current task. They can scan:

- the introduction or preface of a text;
- the first or last paragraphs of chapters;
- the concluding or summarizing chapter of a text;
- the book index.

Skimming is the process of speedy reading for general meaning. Students let their eyes skip over sentences or phrases which contain detail. Concentrate on identifying the central or main points. Students use this technique to:

- pre-view a selection of text prior to detailed reading;
- refresh their understanding of a selection of text following detailed reading.

2.1.4. Receptive and Productive Skills

The macro skills mentioned before are divided into two different groups called receptive and productive skills. Based on what Brown said (2001), the receptive skills are listening and reading because learners do not need to produce language, so they receive the message and understand it. These skills are known as passive skills. On the other hand, the productive skills are speaking and writing, because learners need to produce language. They are also known as active skills.

According to Jolie (2014), the most important is the way students produce their second language because they need to have the capacity to write to have a clear way to express their ideas orally. That is why this author establishes that it is necessary to find ways to overcome the problems while developing the receptive and productive skills. He recommends some ideas in the following chart.

Receptive Skills		Productive Skills	
Reading	**Listening**	**Writing**	**Speaking**
1.Fiction literature	1.Radio	1.Social networks	1. Social networks
2.Professional literatura	2.Audio books	2. Language learning communities	2. Language learning communities
3.Bilingual parallel texts	3. Films	3. Writing Clubs	3. British Council
4.Newspapers, magazines, online	4.Podcasts	4. Private journal	4. Speaking Clubs

news			
5. Blogs	5.Conversations		5. Couchsurfing
6. Scripts	6.Music		6. International learning and volunteer programs

However, for this investigation it is important to focus the attention on the speaking skill because the most important is to analyze the variable that consists on the oral production.

2.1.5. Speaking Skill and its Sub-skills

According to Hayes (1998), the speaking skill is the second one to be acquired after listening. First, he says that the general ideas about speaking are the ones that help students to have a good production because he mentioned that students need time of preparation before speaking. Furthermore, the importance of having time before performing a task is that students are able to develop an activity without nervousness since they have time for thinking what they want to say. On the other hand, Raven (2003) mentions that students need to build their confidence and the teacher needs to provide feedback in the best moment because students do not have the possibility to produce the second language without mistakes. Also, the author believes that the teacher needs to monitor students´ work all the time to help them with the process.

2.1.6. Fluency

Fluency is one of the most necessary sub skills while producing a second language. "Fluency is reading words with no noticeable cognitive or mental effort. It is having mastered word recognition skills to the point of overlearning." Jonas (n.d.). This sub skill provides students the capacity to sound perfect because it

helps them to catch audience´s attention easily since there is not space to stay without saying a word. But, self-confidence is really important to develop this skill in the appropriate way.

2.1.7. Pronunciation

Talking about this one is totally different because this it is the way in which students make sounds. They have to use their vocal tract, lips, mouth, etc. to produce certain sounds that are relevant to transmit a message. "To change the sound that students are making, they mainly use the muscles of their mouth, tongue and lips to control the shape of their mouth and the flow of air. If they can control the shape of their mouth and the flow of air correctly, then their pronunciation is clearer and other people understand them more easily." (Seeker, 2012). One of the most difficult moments students face is the one in which they have to perform some movements with their mouth muscles to make different sounds because they are not accustomed to doing it in their native language. However, students have to overcome this aspect to have positive results in their oral production.

2.1.8. Grammar

According to Lackman (2010), students need to practice using the language appropriately because they need to be clear to express good ideas. Besides, they need to learn the use of new vocabulary to express their ideas in a professional way. Lackman mentioned that students have problems to share what they think because they do not have clear the correct way to structure a sentence. Moreover, they do not have an idea about using connectors because they study a lot to memorize connectors instead of practicing. That is why students speak in the second language, but it is really difficult for the audience to receive the correct message.

2.2. Influence of Spanish Grammar

"Different amounts of exposure to each language will result in different types of cue use. People who learn a first language (L1) at home and begin to acquire a foreign language (FL) may initially use cues from L1 when expressing themselves in EFL. This is called *forward cue transfer"* (MacWhinney, 1997). It is often used when FL learners have not understood the cue system of the foreign language. Instead of abstaining from communicating, most learners use what they know or what they imagine is correct. MacWhinney (1989) proposes the following cues transfers that influence foreign language oral production.

2.2.1. Adjectives and Plurals

Most of the time, adjectives come after the noun as in "casa blanca." If an EFL learner applies the Spanish cue for noun adjective word order to English, the learner might say something like "cat black." The transfer of singular and plural cues is another common pattern that might be seen. Some words that are singular in Spanish are plural in English, and the other way around. For instance, the word "muebles" is plural in Spanish, while its counterpart "furniture" is singular in English. On the other hand, "gente" is singular in Spanish, but its translation "people" is plural in English. So an EFL learner might use forward transfer to utter such as "The furniture*s are* dirty" and "The people *is* nice" in English (Jansen, louise, 2012).

2.2.2. Semantics

Saeed (1997) defines semantics as *the study of meaning communicated through language,* and it is one of the most obvious types of forward cue transfer. It is the substitution of Spanish words for English words. For example, "I want la gorra (the cap)" might be used when an English language learner does not know the vocabulary word for "cap". This is referred to as code-switching which is the impossibility or inappropriateness of assigning specific meanings to some types of variety alternation (Auer, 1989; Alvarez, 1990). Many EFL learners code-switch to add emphasis to what they are saying and also commonly code-switch only when they know their audience

will understand it. Children learning English as a second language may code-switch when it is the only way they know to express an idea.

Because of the different contexts in which they learn each language, bilingual children commonly learn different words in each language. For example, a child whose home language is Spanish may be more familiar with food items and daily routine words such as "toothbrush" in Spanish. Research on FL children's expressive vocabulary shows an approximate overlap of only 30% of words with the same meaning (Schwartz, 2009).

2.2.3. Prepositions

It is a very common area of transfer that has been documented in Spanish speakers acquiring English as a second language is in the use of prepositions. As Martinez and Ventura (2013) underscore "*It seems that preposition is one of the main areas in which cases of language transfer can be found in the language learning process. The influence of learners' mother tongue leads to many errors and, without any doubt, the use of prepositions in English composition show difficulties with this part of* speech." For example, the English prepositions "in" and "on" are both represented in Spanish by the preposition "en." Thus, a Spanish speaker acquiring English might blend the use of the corresponding English prepositions because they are not differentiated in Spanish. Besides, concepts represented by prepositions in English are often represented in Spanish verbs. That is why English is referred to as a satellite-framed language while Spanish is referred to as a verb-framed language. The terms *verb-framing* and *satellite-framing* are used for two different types of languages or constructions: In *verb-framed* constructions, information about a path of movement is expressed in a verb (e.g. *exit, enter, pass*), whereas in *satellite-framed* constructions, information about a path is expressed outside the verb (by satellite), e.g. by adverbial particles (*out, in, past*) (Slobin, D., 2004). For example, in English, prepositions, also called satellites, are used to express direction as in to get *on* the bus and to get *off* the bus. In Spanish, that information is included in the verb (*subir al bus* and *bajar del bus*, respectively). Another example is the word *buscar* in Spanish, which means *to*

look for. No preposition is needed in Spanish. An EFL learner could easily say "Busco mi celular" (*I'm looking (for) my cell phone*).

When Spanish-speaking people learning English as a foreign language use forward transfer, they might produce the sentence "I'm looking my toy," leaving out the preposition. Below, there is a table that includes examples of common uses of Spanish prepositions, their English translations, and the possible ways they might be used by a Spanish speaker learning English (Stubbe & Gorman, n.p). The table doesn´t include all the prepositions, but they best represent the likely transfers.

Spanish preposition	English equivalent	Possible misuses in EFL
"en"	"in" and "on"	Put the food in the plate
"pensar en"	to think about/of	I think in/on you every day.
"enojarse con"	get mad at	Get mad with
"casarse con"	to marry	Did you marry with him?
"consistir en"	consists of	What does the plan consists in?
"buscar"	to look for	I´m looking my mother.

2.2.4. Syntax

As Miller (2002) addresses Syntax is the grammar, structure, or order of the elements in a language statement. There are a number of syntactic operations that differ in English and Spanish, all of which are subject to forward transfer by Spanish speakers learning English as a second language.

2.2.4.1. Word Order

Word order, which was mentioned before, in Spanish is very flexible, while in English the prevailing word order is subject-verb-object (SVO). In Spanish the phrase "Pedro hit me" can be expressed as either "Me pegó Pedro" or "Pedro me pegó." As a result, a Spanish speaker learning English might transfer the flexible word order of Spanish to English to produce "Me hit Pedro" or "Pedro me hit." Another syntactic difference between English and Spanish is in the use of pronouns (Fernández, 2001). In English

pronouns are required after the subject is introduced while in Spanish pronouns are commonly dropped. The pair of sentences "Mary went to the store. She bought bread" would be translated to Spanish as "Mary fue a la tienda. Compró pan." So a person who transfers L1 cues to L2 might say "Mary went to the store. Bought bread," which is the literal translation.

2.2.4.2. Negation

The production of negatives also differs in Spanish and English. In English, single negatives are used while in Spanish double negatives are common (Odline, 1989). For example, a proficient English speaker might say "I do not want anything" while the Spanish translation would be "No quiero nada" (literally "No I want nothing"). It is not uncommon to hear Spanish-speaking children learning English use double negatives in English, such as "I no want nothing" or "I don't want nothing."

Undoubtedly, what was mentioned before demonstrates that there are normal patterns of transfer across languages, and it underscores the need for practitioners to explore the use of both languages in a different situation. Understanding the cue transfers that EFL learners might face is more than essential to develop communicative skills in the foreign language.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

3.1. Research Method

Due to the nature of the research problem and the way it was approached, the researcher went through the qualitative method. This approach helped the researcher to gather and process qualitative data by describing the variables since the collected data was about students´ reactions, behaviors and feelings about how they think Spanish grammar affects their oral production. Also, the instruments were grounded on the basis of the qualitative method, which is described by Bandolier (2007) as the research that interprets and provides detailed information of the topic in study by analyzing people's attitudes, behaviors, experiences, and interactions between

societies. One more point to be considered in this research is that it does not deal with any numerical data, and as it was mentioned before, the focus is the management of qualitative data.

3.2. Research Type

Descriptive research cannot actually be considered to be a pure pioneer of quantitative or qualitative research methodologies; nevertheless, it can use elements of both, even within the same study. The term descriptive research refers to the type of research question, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a given topic (Aect, 2001).

To better understand what descriptive research actually is, it is necessary to know the main characteristics it has: it is led to factual registration and there is no search for an explanation why reality is showing itself this way; that is, descriptive research is not aiming at forming hypotheses or development of theory. Another characteristic of descriptive research is objectivity or neutrality. To sum it up, descriptive research deals with describing how reality is (Tudelftnl, 2002).

Descriptive Research is the most suitable path that this research could take, for it is cohesively linked with the objectives the researcher wanted to reach after developing all the process. The main aim of the research was neither to provide a solution to the students whose native language was affecting their oral production nor to present statistics about how many students were or were not dealing with this issue. In fact, what was pursued was describing the influence of Spanish Grammar on ninth grader´s oral production in EFL when taking World History class.

3. 3. Population and Sample

According to Katrina A. Korb (2012), the target population is the group of people that the researcher wants to draw a conclusion about once the research study is finished. In this research, the population was ninth graders from Interamerican School from Santa Ana. Also, the population showed different issues in grammar and oral production that students have when they use English as a foreign language, but for

this process, the researcher needed to establish certain characteristics which describe and identify the population. These characteristics were:

- Students who have studied at Interamerican School since kindergarten
- Those students who are not taking extra English courses beside the English in the school
- Students who have not been influenced by a member of a family; it means that they have no one to practice at home.
- Students who have not had the opportunity to be in an English-speaking country

The researcher used them as a filter in order to choose from the population to the sample, using a technique that in this case is homogenous sampling technique. According to Cohen D, and Crabtree B. (2006), the homogenous sampling technique is the process of selecting a small homogeneous group of subjects or units for examination and analysis. They also say that homogeneous sampling is used when the goal of the research is to understand and describe a particular group in depth.

3.4. Techniques and Instruments

As it is highlighted before, describing the influence of Spanish Grammar in ninth graders' oral production is what this research aimed; therefore, the techniques and instruments to collect data were based on qualitative research method. The techniques and instruments pursued collecting information from people who were facing difficulties when using ESL orally, such as syntax mistakes, semantics transfers, etc. By applying these techniques and instruments, the researcher certainly had a wider appreciation on the main factors that lead students to blend Spanish Grammar in their ESL oral production.

So, the instruments used were:

a)   Observation – Observation guide (Appendix A and B)

This technique was used before choosing the subjects to be interviewed. This observation was done by the researcher to identify what influences students´ difficulties when producing ESL orally.

b) Interview – Interview guide:

After doing the observation, the researcher administered an interview guide. This guide was an unstructured instrument to get not only closed answers but open ones. The questions were related to the indicators and variables that have guided this research. The interviewees were also recorded to get more faithful information that helped out the researcher to discover how their ESL oral production was influenced by Spanish Grammar. The interview was carried out in English to evaluate and encourage students´ use of EFL.

3.5. Procedure

3.5.1. Validation of Instruments

The validation of instruments was done in three phases:

Phase A: Validation of the instruments with the researcher

After creating the instruments, as a first step, the researcher checked their content thoroughly. For example, if the questions of the interview guide were not appropriate or understandable for the level of subjects of study, the researcher improved that part by rewriting the questions. She checked for structure and content.

Phase B: Validation of the instruments with an expert

After designing the instruments, the researcher gave them to different people experienced in ESL teaching and in research in order to get more validity for a better data collection. In the case of the observation guide, the validation of experts was essential since the researcher needed to make sure the criteria to observe went along with the indicators and variables.

Phase C: Validation of the instruments with the population

The interview guide was given to some students who were part of the population in order to know if they understood all the questions. The researcher provided the questions and the students had to underline what they did not understand. These students belonged to ninth grade, but were not part of the subjects of study.

All of this was done to validate the instruments and so be able to gather more reliable data.

3.5.2. Correction of the Instruments

The researcher took the time to check each of the comments given by the people involved in the validation of the instruments. Then, the researcher made the necessary corrections so that she could use these instruments.

3.5.3. Data Collection

In this stage of the research, the researcher collected data from the selected population, following a qualitative research method. First, the researcher observed the population for one class (45 minutes) and during the observation stage, the researcher filled an observation guide with some criteria that facilitated the process of choosing the suitable subjects. This observation was done in three different sessions so that the collected data were more reliable. After observing, completing and selecting the subjects, the researcher interviewed them. The researcher created an interview guide related to the indicators and variables that she used in order to have a conversation and collect data from the subjects. During the interview, the researcher recorded the whole conversation. Later, she created a transcription of it in order to have the answers given by the subjects in a written form.

3.5.4. Data Processing and Analysis

The processing stage is crucial in the research process because it is used to show the results and validate the data to be collected. According to the type of qualitative study that the researcher chose for this research, she applied different techniques and instruments in order to collect data. After collecting the data from the subjects, the researcher created a matrix on Microsoft Word in order to have a good organization of data. In addition, this organization helped the researcher at the moment of taking decisions among subjects. Also, the analysis stage was really important because it was how the researcher could validate if the research was going through the correct way. The researcher analyzed the data in order to prove if there were answers to the research questions established and the fulfillment of the objectives.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of Results

After the data collection, the researcher went to data processing by means of matrixes to organize the information gathered from the observations and the interviews. Some tables are used in this chapter to portrait some issues students have in common when producing English orally.

As the researcher has been driven by the research questions and the objectives, the data analysis has been a process of comparison and contrast of information gotten after the administration of observations and interviews. It is important to mention that the analysis is done as a whole, which has helped the researcher to describe the influence of Spanish Grammar on the population studied. Although this study had seven subjects of study, there was one student who did not want to participate because she was so shy to be interviewed. The researcher respected her decision because she did not want to gather biased data.

Then, the first point to consider is the answer the researcher can give to the research questions proposed in the research protocol, being the first one *what are the main causes of students´ blending Spanish Grammar in their EFL oral production?* The data gathered provided the necessary information to state that students, first, have problems with word order because in Spanish it is very flexible, while in English the prevailing word order is subject-verb-object. The observations helped to discover that ninth graders blend Spanish Grammar in their oral production when they use adjectives and nouns since they know that adjectives come after the noun in Spanish as in "mujer bonita." Then, they applied the Spanish cue for "noun-adjective" word order in English to say something like "car red." Moreover, students said that they struggle a lot with this point because they did not have the opportunity to study a different language deeply, so they are becoming familiar with a new language structure. Second, students expressed they are worried because they cannot find a way to learn, retain, and practice new vocabulary because they do not have someone to practice at home. They declared that they cannot have good fluency in English, for they do not have the vocabulary they need to express their ideas or thoughts in the

appropriate way. The six students presented in table 1 fortify the idea of the importance the lack of vocabulary has in their oral production. Some of the opinions are combined because those students provided the same information.

Variable: Influence of Spanish Grammar over ninth graders	Question: Do you consider that Spanish Grammar affects your oral production in English? How?		
Student A and B	Student C and D	Student E	Student F
Yes, it affects me a lot. The major problem is my vocabulary because I do not remember. It affects my fluency because I think in Spanish before talking.	Yes, I have problem to connect the ideas because I need more vocabulary. I don´t know how to say what I think. My vocabulary lacks a lot.	I don´t express well my ideas because I can´t say what I think. I get frustrated because I don´t remember the vocabulary.	Yes, it affects because I confuse Spanish Grammar rules with the English Grammar rules. Also, I need vocabulary.

Table 1: From: Interview Guide directed to ninth graders´ of World History class at Interamerican School 2019-2020

Third, there is some confusion in students regarding the correct use of plurals and third person singular in simple present tense. Definitely, this can be associated with the transfer from Spanish to English. For all Spanish speakers it is well-known that the "s" in Spanish represents plural, so English learners who are beginners-as it can be considered for the participants of this research- are in risk of transferring that rule of pluralization in Spanish when they apply the rules for third person singular in English. That is, as it was observed, students make grammar mistakes, such as he work, she drive, etc., in general no application of the rules for the verbs in third person singular. Now, what does this omission of the rules mean? It means that students are in the process of becoming aware of the different functions the suffix "s" has in

English. On one hand, their brain struggles to recognize that the "s" in third person simple present tense means singular, which goes against Spanish rules. On the other hand, their brain wants to portrait that the "s" in English means plural in nouns like it does in Spanish, so specifically the main struggle their brain has is establishing the difference of nouns and verbs. Table 2 summarizes students´ responses regarding this struggle.

Variable: Influence of Spanish Grammar over ninth graders		Question: What is your attitude towards the use of plurals, prepositions, and negatives in English? Good, explain. Bad, explain. Regular, explain.			
Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F
I think it is bad. Third person is difficult. In oral exams, I don´t notice the use of "S".	It is a little bit complicated because I don´t practice the use of "S". I believe it is regular.	I get confused because I don´t know how to use plurals. It is because I don´t remember it.	I mostly forget to use the "S" in verbs. Sometimes is not only "S"	I don´t understand why I need to add "S" to some subjects.	I can´t use plurals. Also, I confuse the adjectives and nouns.

Table 2: From: Interview Guide directed to ninth graders´ of World History class at Interamerican School 2019-2020

Having answered the first question, the researcher has concluded about the second one, and it says *how much does blending Spanish Grammar in the EFL production affect students in their performance?* Using the collected information, the researcher thinks that the students have some problems blending Spanish Grammar in their EFL production. The first problem is that students do not manage at all the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) because they reflect that the four macro-skills are easier in Spanish than in English. It is imperative to mention that the researcher is focused on the first two macro-skills through the subskills pronunciation and fluency because she wanted to know how much students blend Spanish Grammar in the oral production. The participants said that they have more problems

with the oral skills because they tend to think in Spanish in order to speak in English. This point facilitated the researcher to notice that students practice literal translation before expressing their ideas because they believe they need to think in their native language before talking in English. That is why they struggle blending the two languages. Furthermore, they mentioned that the main problem they have with the lack of management of the macro-skills is that they do not control what they feel when talking in English since they do not feel relaxed. Table 3 shows students´ opinions about the problems they have with fluency.

Variable: Students' oral production in English as a foreign language			Question: Do you have problems to express your ideas with fluency in English? Which ones?		
Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F
Yes, I have this problem. I get nervous when I speak in English, and I get block, it affects my fluency because I don´t speak normal or well. It is like if I doubt.	Aja, that´s the worst for me. I don´t have previous practices. I struggle when I want to join the ideas. I think in Spanish. Then, I give ideas in English.	Yes, I can´t control my nervous. I laugh when I speak in front of people. Sometimes, I speak like a stutterer because I think that I can make pronunciation mistakes.	I waste a lot of time because I try to avoid making mistakes. I don´t like to make mistakes because people can laugh when I speak. I feel afraid.	The problem is that I speak slowly. I think in Spanish to have a better idea. Then, I try to say the same in English. It takes time to say in the correct way. So, I don´t have fluency.	I get frustrated when I speak in English because I don´t have time to think before speaking. It takes time. A lot of time. My opinions don´t have sense. I struggle a lot.

Table 3: From: Interview Guide directed to ninth graders´ of World History class at Interamerican School 2019-2020

In other words, the Spanish Grammar affects the students because it makes them struggle at the moment of speaking. One relevant aspect to mention is that students recognized that people do not understand what they say since they are not able to

convey an idea with accuracy, and they expressed that they have this problem because they blend Spanish and English. Besides, the students believe that sometimes they do not feel sure about what they say, but they have discovered that the main cause is that they blend Spanish Grammar over their EFL production.

As students expressed, to control their nervousness is one of the most challenging aspects they deal with, for they are influenced by their ideas or feelings when talking, so they pay much attention to the audience or to the teacher. However, students stated they feel more comfortable when they have a presentation than an oral exam since they have the opportunity to prepare what they have to talk about. Some of students´ opinions are the following: "I feel confident when I have presentations because I feel that I am free to express my ideas. Also, I do not feel nervous." "I feel better when I prepare what I will say in English." It is one key point that helped researcher to discover that students get stuck when they are asked on the spot, and it makes them blend the Spanish Grammar in their EFL production because they do not have the chance to prepare their speech in order to control their production.

Finally, blending Spanish Grammar is a problem that ninth graders have when they are exposed to talk in English because they do not recognize the appropriate way they have to express their thoughts in English. Besides, students´ fluency is affected by the mistakes they have when they tend to use literal translations and also when they do not know the correct order that words have. Also, blending Spanish Grammar affects students´ oral production since students do not take into consideration that in English most of the words are written and pronounced differently. That is why their

pronunciation is affected a lot. Table 4 represents student´s opinions about how they are affected by the words that are written in one way and pronounced differently.

Variable: Students' oral production in English as a foreign language			**Question:** Knowing that most English words are written in a different way than Spanish ones, how does it affect your proficiency?		
Student A	**Student B**	**Student C**	**Student D**	**Student E**	**Student F**
To be sincere, it is difficult with words that I haven´t listen before o the ones the I haven´t seen.	Yes, it affects a lot because it is when the words lost order structure. Also, it affects my pronunciation because we read different.	I don´t have good memory to remember the difference between writing and pronunciation. I make mistakes in almost all the words.	I think that it affects a lot because I read the words in a bad way since I don´t pronounce them differently.	It affects because sometimes I write the words the way I pronounce them or I read them the way they are written.	Yes, it is very difficult for me. I have more problems with new words. It is really bad for me. I feel bad for that.

Table 4: From: Interview Guide directed to ninth graders´ of World History class at Interamerican School 2019-2020

Definitely, the general objective, *to detect the influence of Spanish Grammar on ninth graders´ oral production in EFL*, was successfully reached, and this is evident when scrutinizing into the subjects' responses in the interviews and the observations they went through. As it was mentioned, Spanish Grammar certainly affects EFL students´ oral production negatively, ninth graders from Interamerican School are not the exception. However, it is necessary to clarify that the affected students are the ones who have never studied English before and the ones who do not have anyone to practice their English with.

One of the most common mistakes EFL learners make produced by the influence of Spanish Grammar rules is *Negative forms*. They use the particle "not" in any tense without using the corresponding auxiliary verb, for example, "I not go to the church yesterday" or "I not go to the party tomorrow." Since Spanish negative forms "do not" need any auxiliary, they unconsciously follow the very same pattern in English. This

quote was taken from one student´s response. *"I think in Spanish and I want to talk or write in English the same way."* This example synthesizes the fact that EFL learners utter expressions in English respecting Spanish rules. Another mistake EFL learners usually make is asking disrupted questions by using Spanish structures. They tend to ask "You like it?" or "She is the teacher?" Undoubtedly, this is negative influence of Spanish Grammar over English Grammar. Consequently, these students do not usually convey accurate messages; that is, when they make a question, people cannot infer if it is a question or confirmation. This quote was selected from one of the subjects who was more likely to make questions in English with Spanish Grammar pattern. *"…The worst is that when I speak I have enormous mistakes. For example, I use the adjectives incorrectly or I ask questions incorrectly.* Spanish Grammar has some similarities with English Grammar. These likenesses turn into challenges EFL learners encounter when developing the language because they overgeneralize the similarities and therefore tend to speak English with Spanish Grammar, sometimes. Definitely, this affects students´ production since the influence of Spanish Grammar disturbs their messages. If it is noticeable that it affects students when they hold conversations with their teachers, considering that the teachers are Spanish native speakers, the influence of Spanish Grammar will be more evident when these students hold conversations with English native speakers.

The instrument for the interview guide has six questions, but there are only for tables with questions one, two, three, and six because students provided information for those ones. They did not provide information for questions four and five.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

At the end of this study, the researcher concludes that the results obtained along its development are satisfactory since they match with the expected results, the formulated objectives, and the proposed research questions. The researcher found out that ninth graders blend Spanish Grammar in their oral production. Thus, she concludes that:

- The use of adjectives and nouns affects students´ English Grammar because they struggle a lot to use the correct word order they need to follow in English. Students do not become aware that the adjectives come before the nouns in English. Students blend Spanish Grammar when talking in English because they generalize the grammar rules of their native language with the new language they are learning. One of the causes is that students did not have the chance to study a different language besides their native language, so they are exposed to a new language structure without being prepared to recognize the differences easily.

- Lack of vocabulary is one of the most common problems all students have because they do not know how to retain the new words or expressions they learn during the classes. Moreover, students need to know how to express their ideas in order to convey a meaning, but they cannot achieve this aspect if they do not have the vocabulary they have to use to communicate. In other words, students tend to think in Spanish what they want to say in English, and they do not have the necessary language to produce the ideas they are able to

create in Spanish. That is why it affects students because they do not develop their EFL oral production in the appropriate way.

- Regarding the most common sentence forms students are more likely to build up inaccurately, negatives and questions are the most common ones. Based on what the interviewees answered, it can be highlighted that if students do not recognize what an auxiliary is and all the auxiliaries that the English language has, they will use the particle "not" without any auxiliary to create negative statements, and undoubtedly they will not use auxiliaries to make questions.

- Blending Spanish Grammar in the EFL oral production is a significant problem for ninth graders. It happens since they do not manage the macro-skills very well. In other words, students have problems with two sub-skills that are pronunciation and fluency. Spanish Grammar affects students´ oral production because they tend to think in Spanish before producing their messages in English. That is why they do not provide logical ideas since they use a literal translation and blend the two languages. Finally, students are accustomed to organizing their ideas before expressing them, and they cannot avoid affecting their fluency because they take extra time to say what comes to their minds.

- The students are affected by the words that are written and pronounced differently. The main problem students have is that they cannot be clear on what they say, and it happens because of the lack of accuracy they have when giving messages. Another significant problem of the students is that they cannot control their nervousness, and it is a big challenge for them because they feel unsecure while talking in front of someone else. It means that they

pay attention to the rest of the classmates or the teacher, and it makes them feel lost while speaking.

5.2. Recommendations

After analyzing the gathered data and formulating conclusions, the researcher considers it pertinent to state the following recommendations:

- Teachers need to implement more interactive activities that can help them teach grammar contents inductively so that students can make the contents more meaningful for them. Teaching Grammar inductively can help students have an in depth understanding of English Grammar related to word order to avoid facing problems with the adjectives and the nouns due to the influence of Spanish Grammar. It means that students need to establish the differences between the two languages to obtain the best EFL oral production. Moreover, students have to notice what adjectives and nouns are in order to know where the adjectives go in a sentence, and the inductive method can help to solve those issues.

- It is recommendable for students to implement different techniques to work on vocabulary as a way to improve their oral production. They can try one technique that is writing lines for a period of time they consider appropriate and check their improvement by testing themselves with exercises. Besides, they can even record their speech to talk about any topic and include the new vocabulary or expression they have studied in this period (Brown, 2001). Then, they can implement a new technique

and check their memory and comprehension with different exercises and so on.

- For teachers, even though grammar is not the main focus of communicative EFL classes, teachers can still give enough support to students in this important area by assigning journals so students enhance their ability to write complete and logical sentences. Once students hand in each journal entry, teachers should underline the mistakes for students to correct them and give the journal entry back. After this practice, students can practice the audio diaries to listen to their pronunciation and mistakes while talking.

- Teachers have to be more specific in the activities, and they need to have a main purpose. This purpose can be the implementation of speaking activities such as impromptu speeches, retelling stories, telling anecdotes, etc. It can help students to improve their pronunciation and fluency because they can have the opportunity to practice, and they can learn how to talk without translating from Spanish to English. Moreover, it is recommendable that students record themselves talking about any topic. Then, they can listen to correct themselves. Besides, they can set time to talk about an interesting topic to check if they can improve their fluency to avoid wasting time.

- Students need to become aware of the difference between the written form and the pronunciation of the words, so they can try to overcome this problem by listening to a song, and they can write the lyrics at the

same time. Then, they can check the way they work to notice the mistakes they get in order to avoid the same mistakes the next time they use the words. Also, they can have a box with the words they struggle with in pieces of paper, and they can take out a paper to pronounce the word. On the other hand, students can improve their confidence by talking in front of a mirror or in front of a friend before having a presentation. In this way, they can overcome their nervousness since they practice the language at home. However, they can apply this technique to talk about any topic without preparing their speech for a presentation.

CHAPTER V: TIME TABLE

The following table shows the weeks for collecting the data of this research and it exemplifies how the process was developed.

ACTIVITIES	JANUARY				FEBRUARY				MARCH			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Validation of instruments		▓	▓									
Correction of instruments				▓								
Data Collection					▓	▓						
Data Processing and analysis							▓	▓				
Final report and presentation									▓			

CHAPTER VI: REFERENCES AND APPENDIXES

Appendixes

Appendix A

INTERAMERICAN SCHOOL FROM SANTA ANA

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

NINTH GRADE

Observation

Description: This observation guide has been designed to conduct a direct observation in ninth grade class to identify those students whose EFL oral production is influenced by Spanish grammar.

Objective: To gather information about the students whose EFL oral production is affected by Spanish Grammar

1. Students´ fluency

_____

_____

_____

2. Students blending Spanish with English when talking

_____

_____

_____

3. Students ´ awareness of cognates and false cognates

_____

_____

_____

4. Students´ pronunciation

_____
_____
_____

5. Students´ accurate use of plurals

_____
_____
_____

6. Students´ accurate positioning of adjectives when speaking

_____
_____
_____

Notes:

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_____
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_____

Appendix B

INTERAMERICAN SCHOOL FROM SANTA ANA
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
NINTH GRADE
Interview Guide

Description: This interview guide has been designed to gather information through the variables "influence of Spanish grammar" and "oral production" with the purpose of gathering information from ninth graders

Objective: To identify the way Spanish Grammar affects ninth graders while expressing their ideas orally in English

Date: _____

1. Do you consider that Spanish Grammar affects your oral production in English? How?
2. Do you have problems to express your ideas with fluency in English?
3. What is your attitude toward the use of plurals, prepositions, and negatives in English? Good, explain. Bad, explain. Regular, explain.
4. How do you evaluate your oral production in this grade? Good, regular, bad, why?
5. Based on your sub-skills of oral production in English (Fluency, pronunciation and grammar) Which is more difficult? why?
6. Knowing that most English words are written in a different way than Spanish ones, how does it affect your proficiency?

 Notes:

_____
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_____

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